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Mason. In commemoration of American
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Gift of the
New England
Historic Genealogical Society

November 26, 1917

AN
ORATION

DELIVERED

WEDNESDAY, JULY 4, 1827, IN COMMEMORATION

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

BEFORE THE

SUPREME EXECUTIVE OF THE COMMONWEALTH,

AND THE

CITY COUNCIL AND INHABITANTS

OF THE

CITY OF BOSTON.

BY **WILLIAM POWELL MASON.**

Printed by order of the City Council.

BOSTON :

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Winslow Lewis tract
New England Historic Genealogical Society

W

Oration.

ONCE more, my Fellow Citizens, have we laid aside, for a few hours, the engrossing cares of individual life, the minor pursuits of private gain and personal ambition, to animate ourselves with the contemplation of the characters of those illustrious men, to whom we owe it that we now meet as we do.

We have assembled to bear witness, once more, to the civilized world, that our bold attempt to erect an independent government, to establish free institutions, and to support republican principles, was not the visionary project of unsound philosophers, of inexperienced statesmen, of ambitious and desperate leaders, and of a weak minded and misguided people ; but was the natural and necessary result of the feeling manners and principles, of our ancestors.

We have assembled, once more, to hold up the cheering light of our example, to those portions of the world yet wasting under the blighting influence of foreign or domestic tyranny, and to declare to them the vivifying and happy effects of pure and rational liberty.

The same glorious occasion which has brought us together for so many past years, has brought us together now, but yet are we assembled this day under novel and peculiar circumstances.

That omnipotent ruler, and governor of all things, who first breathed into the spirits of our illustrious Fathers the aspirations of liberty; and opened upon their prophetic minds, those glorious visions of independence and happiness, which have been made realities to us; and who confirmed their hearts and strengthened their hands, that they might carry into effect these great conceptions of their minds; and who guided, protected and preserved them through the vicissitudes of our revolution; was pleased in his infinite wisdom, to lengthen out the lives, of some of them, and continue to them their faculties to the very verge of human existence, that we their descendants might enjoy the benefit of their labours, their counsels, and their example, until we had become perfect in their principles and feelings. Until the last election of

the Chief Magistrate of our nation, some one of these distinguished men have presided over our country, and when at length they retired from the labours of public life, they retired not to pass the short remnant of their lives in that state of sluggishness, indolence and insensibility, which is natural to advanced age, but continued to issue forth to us, from their retirement, such maxims of wisdom, as experience like theirs, alone could dictate. Who of you, my Fellow Citizens, who were members of the last convention of this our native state, who of us who witnessed its deliberations, can ever forget the feelings excited in us, by seeing the venerable sage of Quincy, one of the first movers and one of the principal instruments of our independence, the patriarch of a former age, take his seat in that assemblage of his sons? But he will meet with us no more. Whilst we were last collected on this very occasion, whilst the united and imperishable names of Adams and Jefferson were bursting from our lips; whilst their deeds and their virtues were the theme of every tongue; whilst the recital of the benefits they had conferred upon us, was kindling every heart, their immortal spirits were together on the way to heaven. They were rising amid the shouts and acclamations of this vast continent; amid the cheers and blessings of

twelve millions of freemen, of twelve millions of men whom their toils and exertions had eminently contributed to render free and happy. We knew not indeed at the moment of our rejoicings, that we were Fatherless, but had we known it, what more appropriate knell could we have sounded, for departing spirits such as theirs ? They have gone to associate again with their copatriots, gone to render an account, with them, of their deeds, to that Being who entrusted to their stewardship this fair portion of his creation. The remnant of that sacred band yet lingering amongst us, have resigned into our hands our Patrimony, and we their descendants have assembled this day, our minority past, to examine the inheritance thus handed over to us.

In the year 1761, in that old building, which still remains a monument to the eloquence, patriotism and fearlessness of our Fathers, James Otis, first boldly expressed those sentiments of independence, those maxims of eternal right, those principles of natural equality among men, which lighted up in the minds of his willing hearers, that flame of liberty which was never to be extinguished.

It was then, that our future statesmen were first roused to thought. It was then, ~~that~~ their imaginations were first led to conceive the bold outline of

our future destinies. It was then, that their minds were first prepared for those momentous events which were soon to follow.

The injurious policy which Great Britain had determined to adopt towards her colonies, then first displayed itself. The eloquence and wisdom of a Chatham and a Burke, arrested for a time, the blind impulses of men, but they availed not to impede the decrees of Heaven.

It was at this time, that our immediate ancestors and the authors of our Independence, may be said to have come to their inheritance, to have entered into possession of that talent, for the faithful management of which, they became responsible to us, their descendants, and to their God. And what was then the situation of the country? The twelve unconnected governments now forming a part of these United States, were the dependent colonies of a nation three thousand miles distant from them. Receiving from the hereditary head of that nation their chief magistrates and principal public officers, and virtually and practically, if not confessedly, bound by laws enacted by the Parliament of that nation, in which they were not represented. Without a navy, without an army, without commerce, without manufactures, without money, possessing but limited means of educa-

tion, divided in opinion as to the course which ought to be taken to obtain a redress of their grievances, and about to enter into a contest with the most powerful nation of the world. I shall not attempt to portray to you, the exalted and pure sentiments of liberty which induced them to peril their fortunes and their lives in the cause of Independence. Their entire freedom from all personal motives and private objects. The firmness and resolution with which they met, and overcame, the numberless trying difficulties and unexpected obstacles which obstructed their course. Their unabated zeal and composure in times of disaster and defeat, and the moderation and dignity of their conduct in moments of success. I will ask you only to judge of the merits of these men by what they have accomplished. What is the inheritance which they have handed over to us?

Extend your view to the South, until you catch the glancing waters of the Gulf of Mexico, and see in that direction an acquisition of territory, the history of which discloses no scenes of military conquest, to render its value uncertain, or its tenure doubtful.

Pierce, if you can, the illimitable forests and boundless prairies of the west, and ask the flying native, as he retreats before the pioneers of civil-

ization, where your western boundary is? and he will point you to the setting sun, as it sinks into the swelling bosom of the Pacific ocean.

Listen to the voice of that mighty cataract, whose ever rushing waters are drawn through the vast lakes of the north. It proclaims with its ceaseless roar the course of your northern boundary.

Turn you to the east, and the shores of the Atlantic indeed describe your territorial limits, but cast your eyes far over its waters, look abroad over ocean under whatever name it rolls, and see the flag of your country displayed in the remotest parts of the world, bearing thither convincing evidences of your wealth and power.

Look where you may over this extensive continent, and the scattered cabins have given place, within a few years, to populous towns, and towns become populous cities. Temples consecrated to God, and edifices devoted to science and literature, have with equal rapidity, spread themselves over our land. We are furnished with a navy, which already acknowledges but one rival; with an army peculiarly adapted to our character and situation.

Inheriting the language, the laws, and the literature, of the most civilized and improved nation of the world, and assisted by the energy, activity, industry and spirit of improvement, which institu-

tions such as ours are calculated to infuse ; from being the deprest and dependent colonies of that nation, we have at once become an independent and powerful people, competing with our parent country in every thing which tends to advance and strengthen us as a nation, and to improve and ennoble us as human beings. This is the patrimony which our Fathers have left us. But great as it is, is it all that we receive from them ? Oh no, far other wise. This fair continent ; these growing cities ; this excellent form of government ; these free institutions, and all the care, labour and danger they have undergone for us, make up but a small part of what we receive from them.

It is the example they have left us ; the virtues they practised ; the spirit of liberty which they cherished ; their high and ennobling sentiments ; their pure patriotism ; their untiring zeal ; the resistless energy they displayed in the service of their country and fellow men ; their freedom from low and selfish ambition ; their manners, principles and feelings. This is the priceless gift, which calls for our gratitude and praise.

Let every other vestige of these men be destroyed and forgotten. Let our fruitful fields again become pathless wilds. The savage return to his ancient haunts. Let all the institutions of

civil government, all the establishments of religion, science and the arts be erased, and these twenty four united and powerful states again dwindle into twelve disconnected and dependent colonies, and yet inheriting the manners, principles and feelings of our ancestors, estimating them as we ought, and practising upon them, and a few years would again restore us to our present state of wealth, power and happiness.

Possessing as we do, these advantages, at peace with all nations, advancing with the most rapid steps, in the sciences and arts, successful in all our plans of self-government, exercising the most perfect civil and religious liberty, prosperous and happy both as a nation and as individuals, beyond the most sanguine hopes of the most ardent disciples of liberty ; what have we of this generation to do, what is left for us to do, but to enjoy with thankfulness the glorious heritage which a benevolent Providence and our patriotic ancestors have provided for us. Fellow Citizens, be not deceived, lay not aside, at your peril, the armour so successfully worn by your Fathers. Much indeed has been done by them to obtain the countless blessings we enjoy, but much remains to be done by us, to maintain and secure these blessings. True, we may not expect to hear again within the halls of this

our native city, and throughout our land, the bold language of the excited patriot, discussing the rights of man, and calling upon us to throw off the chains of a foreign domination. True, we may not have again to stake our fortunes, our lives, and our liberties in the cause of National Independence. True, we shall not be called upon to adjust again in our councils, the limits of natural and practical liberty, nor have the merit of claiming and assuming an equal station among the ruling powers of the earth. These things have been accomplished for us. But for all that has been done, let not those who burn with an honourable emulation of these deeds, fear that no field is left for their exertions. Patriotism is not a virtue which is needed only in a particular generation or peculiar period, it is in constant demand wherever civil liberty exists. Its services, although less imposing, may not be less important now, than in the days of our Fathers. I would not withdraw one sprig of laurel from the many verdant garlands that hang around their graves, but if we would discharge with fidelity the duties which they have left us to perform, we must examine with impartial judgments, the relative difficulties of their situation and our own.

They had indeed to contend with many obsta-

cles, from which we are happily relieved, but at the same time they possessed many aids which we may sorely lack.

We must recollect that it is in times of the greatest danger, responsibility and excitement, that our noblest passions and highest virtues are most fully and readily developed. ~~Then it is then~~ that, high resolve, bold daring, unslackning zeal, unyielding firmness and a generous self-devotion to the public cause, come willingly to our assistance. Then it is, that the latent powers and untold resources of individuals, and nations, burst forth into action, with an omnipotency which could not be foretold.

On the other hand, it is in seasons of individual and national security, prosperity and quiet, that all the lower passions, and impulses of the human character spring up in rank luxuriance. Then it is, that an ignoble, selfish ambition, takes the place of patriotism, and urges us to personal aggrandisement at the expense of the public good. Then it is, that a debilitating self-indulgence, a craving for pleasure and ease, spreads itself through society, and weakens and destroys all the better principles of our nature. Then it is, whilst luxury and effeminacy, are debasing the more affluent and least active part of the community, that the disor-

ganizing spirit of faction scatters its firebrands among the more needy and restless.

It was through a period of the former description, that our ancestors so manfully conducted this country. It is through a period of the latter description, that it has fallen to the lot of this generation to conduct it.

They did much. They acted greatly. They emancipated us from a foreign servitude. They defended us from a foreign foe. They conceived and put into operation, and first administered for us, that National Constitution, which is the source of our prosperity and happiness, and the glory of the age. Great have been their labours and exertions, great their merit, and great and lasting shall be their reward.

But much also remains for you to do, and greatly must you also act, if you would complete the noble undertaking which they have so successfully commenced. You have not indeed to rouse your country to a just sense of its rights, or to conduct it through the throes of a revolution, but you have the more arduous, though less splendid task of preserving it from the attacks of those destructive passions which have ever accompanied and finally overthrown all other free governments ; from unprincipled ambition, local prejudices, and a blind, unre-

lenting and selfish spirit of party. You have not to go through the labour, or to enjoy the glory of having first put into action, our free institutions ; but yours is the still more difficult duty of keeping them in pure and healthful operation, when the excitements in which they originated, and which at first supported and preserved them, have ceased ; and when other objects, other passions, and other circumstances, than those which gave them birth, are diffusing other, and far different influences, through the community.

Great indeed were the responsibilities of our ancestors, but how infinitely greater are those which press upon us. Had they failed in their attempts at independence, they would have failed in a new and glorious undertaking, originating with themselves. They would have been responsible for this failure, to their cotemporaries and countrymen, whose fortunes had been used, and blood expended ; and the penalty of their rashness would have been the loss of their lives, and the confiscation of their estates.

They would have been adjudged traitors, yes, they would have been adjudged traitors by an incensed king, traitors to arbitrary power. But so long as there remained on this globe, a single disciple of liberty, they would have been hailed as her most loyal and faithful sons. The

spirit of liberty, although repulsed and repressed by their failure, would not have been extinguished, but would have been connected and enshrined with their memories, in the hearts of their descendants, ready to burst forth again at some more propitious moment.

But what are our responsibilities? We are responsible for the discharge of our political duties, for the careful preservation of these free institutions, to the preceding generation who have thus obtained and established them for us. If we allow them to be impaired, the spirit of them weakened, or their purposes perverted, then are we answerable for all that has been done and suffered in their attainment.

We are responsible to the existing generation; to our cotemporaries; to each other; for we have each of us a right to require of all the rest, that their conduct and sentiments should be such as to support the privileges, which are the equal inheritance of us all.

We are responsible to the countless, coming generations, who are to follow us in this wide spread land. The effects of our conduct are not confined to ourselves and our immediate descendants, but are to influence the destinies of our country for untold centuries.

We are responsible not only to our own country and to the millions of human beings who now do, or may hereafter people it, but to every other country of this globe, and all its present and all its future inhabitants.

We have advanced sentiments concerning the natural and political rights of man, which are exciting the minds of men, who live under the most despotic governments, to reflections on this subject, and awakening hopes, which must eventually lead them to liberty or sink them into the deepest despair.

We have lighted up a fire, which must be kept alive by us, until it has spread itself over the whole habitable globe, and purified the entire world of despotism, tyranny and oppression, or it must be quenched here, and elsewhere, by oceans of blood.

There are two great principles operating in the world, in relation to the political rights of men. One of them is founded upon the virtue and intelligence of the mass of the people, and their capability and right of governing themselves. The other upon their vice, ignorance and incapacity, and maintains the divine and hereditary right of certain individuals to govern them. There is no neutral ground, no mid-way course. These principles are so incompatible with each other, so diametrically opposed,

that the preponderance and success of the one, must in time entirely subvert and destroy the other. It is our boast that the former of these principles originated here. By our bold and confident assertion of it in the face of the world, we have given a pledge that we will support it. If we maintain this pledge, the name of an American will be an honor and glory to the end of time, if we fall from it, that name will become a reproach and by-word among the nations.

Nor are we responsible to man alone. If we believe, with our pious Forefathers, that it was an omniscient God who first impressed their minds with the desire of religious liberty; that it was his hand that led them across the ocean to this then wilderness, and protected their little band from the ruthless savages and stormy elements. If we believe that he has continued to watch over, guide and protect this growing people, and brought them to the moral and political eminence of which we this day boast, then are we in the highest degree responsible to him for the manner in which we treat his favours. This glorious revelation of human liberty, is not the birth-right of Americans alone, that they may receive or reject it at their pleasure, but is the equal property of the whole human race, and we are but the favoured instruments

of its promulgation. Great indeed shall be our reward if we prove faithful and zealous agents, and proportionably great and signal shall be our punishment if we prove weak and unworthy servants.

These are some of the responsibilities, which attach to Americans of this age. And they are responsibilities, from which we cannot escape.

There are periods of the world, and portions of the earth, in which whole generations of men may go down silently and unnoticed to their graves, and at least enjoy the privilege of being forgotten; when, if they may not dare to expect the praises of posterity, they may yet hope to escape its reproaches. But such is not the period in which we live, nor such the country we inhabit.

I will not endeavour to stimulate you to the performance of your duties, by promising you an immortality of fame in after ages. No, this is your birth-right, you cannot lose it. Neglect these duties, ruin your country, and disappoint the world, yet, fear not, your names shall be immortal, as immortal as your ancestors'. On the same page of history on which their names and deeds are recorded, and in as imperishable characters, shall yours also be inscribed. And when the future heroes of far distant centuries shall turn back to that page for stimulants to their exertions; future states-

men and patriots look there for lessons of wisdom and virtue ; and the future poet draw thence a noble theme for his aspiring muse ; your names shall not be passed by unnoticed by them, the same voices that swell with praises and benedictions to the memories of your ancestors, shall load yours with execrations and contempt. Let us, my countrymen, escape so disgraceful an immortality. Let us avert so disastrous a termination of our hitherto brilliant career. Let us turn from the contemplation of the deeds and virtues of our ancestors ; from felicitations on our own happy circumstances ; and from musings on the many bright and glowing objects which spread themselves out in the splendid prospect before us, and endeavour to expose, whilst we may yet avoid them, some of the rocks, and precipices which lay in our path, and which are not the less dangerous because they are decked with flowers. The moralist truly tells us, that the most perfect things of this world, yet carry with them the taint of imperfection. The all glorious works of nature, require the constantly sustaining and corrective hand of their great creator. And in man, and in all the labour of his hands and all the emanations of his mind, are contained the seeds of decay and dissolution. We may not hope to obtain for ourselves or our country, an exemption

from this universal law, but we may hope to effect what is within the power of man to do, what it was meant he should do. We may hope, by constant watchfulness and exertions, to repress the growth of every noxious principle in our natures, and to stimulate and quicken into perfect operation all the great and noble ones.

What then are the principles and passions of the human character, to which the institutions of this republic are most exposed, and from which they are most to apprehend danger. And among the first and most prominent of them all, I name *ambition*.

An eminent scholar and statesman of the present day, has said on an occasion similar to this, "Republics, we are told, are ambitious," and he adds, "a seemingly wise remark devoid of meaning." And with regard to our Republic, I agree with him that this is a remark devoid of meaning, but he refers to that general, national ambition, which leads a people to desire and attempt the acquisition of territory by military conquest. We are indeed safe from such an ambition ; our local situation, our habits and principles ; the peculiar conformation of our government and of our military establishments ; the genius of the people ; the relative position of other nations, and the character of the age we live in ; all tend to prevent the indulgence of such an

ambition as this. But I do not speak of such an ambition. I do not speak of that ambition which enabled the Adamses, whilst they viewed with ardent, and determined gaze, the liberties of the people and the independence of their country on the one hand, to look, with as undaunted eyes upon the gallows, on the other.

I speak not of that ambition which induced an Otis to declare and propagate the principles of liberty, regardless of threats and personal abuse from the worthless hirelings of arbitrary power. Nor of that which influenced a Quincy to part from a doating wife and a dependent family, to quit the gains of a lucrative professional business, and the management of a scanty fortune, that he might gather friends for his countrymen, amid that people where rulers were attempting to oppress them. Which enabled him, when returning with an exhausted frame and depressed mind, when within sight of his native shores, within view of the outstretched hands of his expecting friends, to resign without a murmur, that patriot spirit to his God, and leave to the embraces of that disconsolate wife and an only surviving child, but his cold and lifeless body. Oh, this was indeed ambition; a noble, pure and true ambition. An ambition which men may emulate, and God approve. It was the

exercise of such an ambition which conquered for us our liberties. It is by the exercise of such an ambition alone, that they can be preserved.

But I speak not of such an ambition. I speak of a cold, heartless, selfish, individual ambition. An ambition which is the prolific mother of a motley progeny of vices. An ambition whose object is inequality, self-aggrandisement, power; whose means are corruption, faction, discord; and whose ultimate consequences are slavery.

An ambition, which, whilst it declaims in well set language about the rights of the people, would trample upon them. Whilst it vaunts of the intelligence of the people, fears and deprecates it; and whilst it praises the virtue of the people, undermines it. It is of such an ambition I would speak. It is against such an ambition I would warn you, as being so much the more dangerous to us, because although opposed in every particular to the genius and spirit of our institutions, it is yet the natural and abundant growth of them. If the ark of our liberties is yet to be wrecked, it is on this gilded rock that it will strike. If this Republic is fated, like all former ones, to fall from the high eminence to which it has attained, it is over this flower-crowned precipice that it will be dashed.

It is the ground-work of our institutions, that all men are equal, that neither birth, nor fortune, nor any other adventitious circumstances, not even talents, shall secure a pre-eminence in political privileges; that all offices of trust, profit and honor, shall be within the reach of all classes of the community. Nor do these equitable principles exist in theory only, but are fully supported by our practice. What incentives are here to ambition! What other country, ancient or modern, ever presented to its citizens any so wide spreading and powerful?

This ambition is imbibed by Americans in their earliest youth. The fond mother as she rocks the cradle of her sleeping son, soothes her maternal cares with the belief, that she is rearing a future leader of her country's councils; and the ambitious father tempts the stripling to his letters, with the common promise of the presidential chair.

The embryo aspirant, under such flattering instructors, soon receives into his pliant mind, that germ of ambition, which once well fixed there, becomes a part of the mind itself, and can never be eradicated. He soon begins to weave his own ambitious web. He soon begins to entertain feelings of jealousy and rivalry towards his youthful competitors, and to devise schemes for their defeat

and his own advancement. He loves his country because it is the only field for his growing ambition. He praises her free institutions and the equal rights of the people, because without these his own selfish hopes would be cut off. He soon perfects himself in the political dogma, that the magnitude of the end to be obtained justifies the means that are to be used. If circumstances are propitious to him, he becomes the violent leader of a dominant party. If unpropitious, the willing and worthless tool of some more successful demagogue.

The peculiar conformation of our political system not only presents stronger incentives to a wide, and more general spread of this ambition, than any other, but it also furnishes infinitely more abundant means of gratifying it. The country divided into a great and unlimited number of equal and independent governments, each having its supreme and subordinate offices of distinction and emolument to be filled; and these all connected together by another and more extensive system, comprehending in its range all our foreign relations, and presenting to the ambitious, a still greater number of more lucrative, more distinguishing and more important offices. The occupancy of these innumerable offices, not co-extensive with the lives of the incumbents, or with their fitness or capacity for the

discharge of the duties of them, but limited, either by the spirit of our institutions, or by positive law, to a short term of time, so that the hungry office-seeker need not become faint from waiting for the loaves and fishes, nor the disappointed politician, from one defeat, give up his country as lost, and abandon forever his hopes of saving her.

This is the common course of that ambition which is generated by institutions like ours in times of national prosperity ; and these the excitements and aliments which promote its growth. It is the same ambition, in principle, which induces the kings and emperors of the world, still to hold, with unrelaxing grasp, the chains which bind their degraded subjects. The same which induces their princes and nobles to support a system, which maintains their own hereditary rank, and privileges, and preserves them from the competition of the people. It is the same ambition which has corroded the liberties of all former republics, and finally destroyed them.

It may be said, that the power and influence, by the aid of which, the leaders of these republics, overturned the liberties of their country, were obtained through the means of military renown, and were conferred by an illiterate and warlike people ; and that the situation of our country, and the supe-

rior information of its inhabitants, will effectually preserve us from a like danger. And yet have we not at this very moment, the most convincing proof, that in this unwarlike, intellectual and intelligent community, military reputation opens no uncertain road to popular favor. And should this unhallowed ambition, working for its own selfish purposes, and gathering strength as it advances, eventually excite such rancorous party feelings, such local prejudices and sectional jealousies, as should terminate in a dissolution of the union of these states, where would there then be a greater demand for military talents, or where a fairer field for the exercise of them, than here ?

It may be said, that notwithstanding the intrigues and exertions of aspiring partisans, party spirit, faction, and a devotion to particular individuals, can never be carried to an extreme, in this country. That the sound and sober sense of the community will, in the end, always unite it in the choice of the best men to fill the chief offices of the government. And yet, have we not already seen that those distinguished personages, whose eminent services in the establishment of this government had given them almost an indefeasible right first to administer it, no sooner resigned their official duties, than eager candidates, each supported, by numerous faithful

adherents, rushed at once from every quarter of the union, to seize upon the relinquished robes of state, and occupy the national palace? Have we not seen, that the people at large, so far from readily uniting in a selection from this generous list of Patriots, were unable to come to any choice at all? And when a selection was finally made, in the only remaining constitutional mode, have we not heard the disappointed minority, a minority embracing some of our great and gifted men, boldly and confidently assert, that ambition, corruption and intrigue had already placed an individual at the head of the government, against the will of a majority of the people? Have we not heard it as boldly and confidently asserted by the friends of the successful candidate, that this determined opposition to him, arose from an unprincipled, ambitious and disorganising faction? And if either of these assertions have any thing of truth in them, is the danger which I suggest altogether unreal?

Witnessing these things, at this early period of our national existence, shall we be considered as indulging foolish fears and groundless alarms, in viewing, with some apprehension, the growth of that ambition, which has ever been the root of bitterness, the chief instrument of discord, wars,

and despotism, in every other part of the world ? Least at some future period, when the great events of our revolution, and the elevated and noble sentiments which animated the actors in it, shall no longer be matters of personal knowledge, but known only through the medium of history ; and when luxury and wealth, and a more commanding rank among the ruling powers of the earth, shall have diffused through an increased population, the passions which such circumstances naturally produce ; this ambition may gain such an ascendancy, as to check the operation of all nobler and more disinterested sentiments, and finally overturn our boasted liberties.

It may be said, that this passion is so inherent in the character of man ; that it is so intimately connected with all human affairs and circumstances ; so interwoven with our better feelings and affections ; the spring and origin of so much good as well as so much evil ; that it is neither possible, nor perhaps desirable, to extinguish or permanently control it.

If this be so, then is the fate of this country already past upon ; then are our liberties yet to be subverted ; and we are again to be reduced to a more severe and disgraceful bondage than that from which we have escaped ; for the very founda-

tion of our political system is laid in public and private virtue ; and virtue, private or public, has no more determined and deadly enemy, than this low and selfish passion, miscalled ambition. But I reject this degrading theory, it is the theory of hereditary and arbitrary power, the fashionable cant of despotism and usurping ambition. Far happier views of the human character, and of its capacity for improvement, present themselves to my mind. Notwithstanding the dangers and trials to which we may be exposed, and which it becomes us duly to estimate, and provide against, I believe that this favoured country is yet destined to prove to the world, that political energy and national and individual virtue are not incompatible. That man requires not to be restrained from evil, and driven to his duty by the physical force of his fellow man. That self-interest and self-advancement are not the only motives which can excite us to great exertions and personal sacrifices. I believe, that although dark clouds may occasionally arise in our political horizon, they will not be permitted entirely to overcast it, but that when they become most dense and threatening, future Franklins will be raised up amongst us, to draw from them their destructive fluid, and cast it harmless at our feet.

But, my fellow-citizens, be the future fortunes of

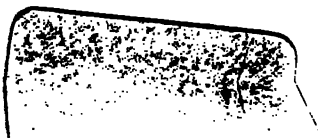
our country what they may, let us never forget that it was here, in our native state, here in our native town, that the standard of liberty was first erected, and here let it last be taken down. Let us rally around it, not in the spirit of party, not with feelings of sectional jealousy, not to gratify our ambition, but to maintain and defend our rights. Here amid the graves of our illustrious Fathers, amid the graves of the Hancocks, Adamsses, Otises, and Quincys of the past generation, let us study the volume which records their glorious deeds and exalted virtues, like the sacred book which prescribes our religious faith, we shall ever find in it new lessons of wisdom to guide and improve us, we shall ever rise from its perusal, wiser men, better citizens and truer republicans.

Let us, my fellow-citizens, catch those exulting words which fell last from the lips of the dying patriot of Quincy. Let them compose the motto engraved upon our arms, the talisman ever worn next our hearts. Let them be the first words that we teach our children, and the last that we utter ourselves—“*Independence for ever.*”



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